

I claim:

- 1       1. A method for controlling access to digital information, comprising:  
2              storing digital information in an encrypted form on a host system; and  
3              reproducing the digital information using a media player application on the  
4              host system, said reproducing step including degrading a reproduction  
5              quality of the digital information based on at least one of a time condition  
6              and a use condition.
- 1       2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
2              storing data on the host system which correlates a first type of decryption  
3              key with a first type of reproduction quality degradation performed based on at  
4              least one of said time condition and said use condition;  
5              storing said first type of decryption key on the host system;  
6              comparing said first type of decryption key to the data stored on the host  
7              system to identify said first type of reproduction quality degradation,  
8              wherein said reproducing step includes degrading the reproduction quality  
9              of the digital information in accordance with the first type of reproduction quality  
10             degradation identified in said comparing step.

1       3.     The method of claim 2, further comprising:  
2              storing additional data on the host system which correlates a second type  
3              of decryption key with information which indicates that the digital information is  
4              to be reproduced without degradation in quality;  
5              storing said second type of decryption key on the host system; and  
6              comparing said second type of decryption key to the additional data stored  
7              on the host system,  
8              wherein said reproducing step includes reproducing the digital  
9              information on said media player application without degradation in quality based  
10             on said additional data comparing step.

1       4.     The method of claim 3, wherein said information which indicates that the  
2              digital information is to be reproduced without degradation in quality instructs  
3              said media player application to permanently prevent the first type of reproduction  
4              quality degradation indicated by said first type of decryption key.

1       5.     The method of claim 1, wherein said reproducing step includes degrading  
2              the reproduction quality of the digital information by altering a decompression of  
3              the digital information.

1       6.     The method of claim 1, wherein said reproducing step includes degrading

2       the reproduction quality of the digital information by altering a rendering of the  
3       digital information.

1       7.      The method of claim 1, wherein the host system is one of a personal  
2       computer, a personal digital assistant, and a digital set-top box.

1       8.      The method of claim 1, wherein the media player application includes  
2       tamper-resistant software.

1       9.      A method for controlling access to digital information, comprising:  
2               acquiring digital information for reproduction on a host system;  
3               sending the digital information to the host system with a first decryption  
4       key, said first decryption key instructing an application program on the host  
5       system to degrade the reproduction quality of the digital information based on at  
6       least one of a time condition and a use condition.

1       10.     The method of claim 9, further comprising:  
2               receiving information from a user of the host system, said information  
3       indicating a desire to have unrestricted access to the digital information; and  
4               sending a second decryption key to the host system, said second decryption  
5       key instructing the application program to reproduce the digital information

6 without degradation in quality.

1 11. The method of claim 10, wherein said second decryption key instructs the  
2 application program to reproduce the digital information without degradation.

1 12. The method of claim 9, wherein said first decryption key instructs the  
2 application program to degrade the reproduction quality of the digital information  
3 by altering a decompression of the digital information.

1 13. The method of claim 9, wherein said first decryption key instructs the  
2 application program to degrade the reproduction quality of the digital information  
3 by altering a rendering of the digital information.

1 14. The method of claim 9, wherein said sending step includes:  
2 sending the application program with the digital information and said first  
3 decryption key.

1 15. The method of claim 14, wherein the application program performs a  
2 tamper-resistance function when executed on the host system.

1       16. The method of claim 14, further comprising:  
2              storing data in the application program which correlates said first  
3              decryption key with a first type of reproduction quality degradation performed  
4              based on at least one of said time condition and said use condition, wherein the  
5              application program performs the first type of reproduction quality degradation  
6              when executed on the host system.

1       17. The method of claim 16, further comprising:  
2              storing additional data in the application program which correlates a  
3              second decryption key with information indicating that the digital information is  
4              to be reproduced by the application without degradation in quality; and  
5              sending said second decryption key to the host system,  
6              wherein said application program compares said second decryption key to  
7              said additional data and then reproduces the digital information without  
8              degradation in quality.

1       18. The method of claim 17, wherein said second decryption key instructs the  
2              application program to permanently prevent the reproduction quality degradation  
3              of the digital information performed by said first decryption key.

4       19. The method of claim 16, further comprising:

2           storing additional data in the application program which correlates a  
3       second decryption key with a second type of reproduction quality degradation,  
4       said second type of reproduction quality degradation being less severe than the  
5       first type of reproduction quality degradation;  
6           sending said second decryption key to the host system,  
7           wherein said application program compares said second decryption key to  
8       said additional data and then reproduces the digital information with said second  
9       type of reproduction quality degradation.

1       20.   The method of claim 11, further comprising:  
2           defining a pricing structure wherein said second decryption key is priced  
3       higher than said first decryption key.

1       21.   A method for controlling access of digital information, comprising:  
2           storing digital information in an encrypted form on a host system;  
3           reproducing said digital information a first time with a first quality of  
4       reproduction, and  
5           reproducing said digital information a second time with a second quality of  
6       reproduction, said second quality of reproduction being degraded relative to said  
7       first quality of reproduction.

8       22. A method for controlling access of digital information, comprising:  
9               providing digital information to a host system, said host system including  
10          an application program for reproducing the digital information; and  
11               providing a decryption key to the host system which instructs the  
12          application program to prevent the digital information from being reproduced  
13          after the digital information has been reproduced a predetermined number of  
14          times.

1       23. A method for controlling access of digital information, comprising:  
2               storing digital information in an encrypted form on a host system;  
3               storing an application program for reproducing the digital information on  
4          the host system;  
5               storing a first decryption key on the host system; and  
6               activating the application program to reproduce the digital information on  
7          the host system, said application program reproducing the digital information  
8          based on said first decryption key, said first decryption key controlling said  
9          application program to reproduce only a portion of the digital information.

1       24. The method of claim 23, further comprising:  
2               storing a second decryption key on the host system,  
3               wherein said application program reproduces the digital information a

4 second time based said second decryption key, said second decryption key  
controlling said application program to reproduce all of the digital information.

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